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# 15

## Recreational Aspects of Water Development

**O**utdoor recreation is one of several leisure uses of water: others are water and environmental education, scientific inquiry, recreation programs, active and passive outdoor recreation activities and skill training outdoor recreation activity. More specifically, water development uses include fishing, hunting, swimming, power boating, sailing, wind surfing, scuba diving, personal water craft uses, jet skiing, remote controlled model boats and aesthetic enjoyment. Many other activity facilities are favored on a water-related setting; e.g., camping, picnicking, trail uses including hiking, bicycle riding, mountain bike riding, ATV use and touring.

### 15.1 Introduction

This section presents recent findings from the 1990-91 Statewide Household Recreation Survey conducted for the Utah State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Planning (SCORP) process.<sup>5</sup> Findings from a series of local public meetings are presented. These meetings resulted in the preparation of a priority list of key recreation and environmental issues to be addressed in the future. Some of the issues relate to facility development, including water developments in Utah. This section

**Water development generally contributes to the local, regional and statewide leisure and outdoor recreational estate or resource inventory. Free-flowing water is also an important part of the area resource.**

describes water-related aspects of outdoor recreation in the Kanab Creek/Virgin River Basin. This includes consumer or participant's expressions of outdoor recreation needs/demands, issues and alternative solutions.

### 15.2 Setting

While this area includes the lowest geographical elevation in the state of Utah (Mojave Desert-Beaver Dam Wash), it is also one of the driest with some of the highest and growing demands for water use. The major public land managers are the Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service and the Utah Division of State Lands and Forestry. They

control over 80 percent of the basin study area.<sup>2</sup>

The availability of and accessibility to water is a concern: "...many cities and towns throughout the country lament lost opportunities to conserve and provide public access to their river corridors...to integrate these corridors into the fabric of their communities...providing greenways and walkways...linking key recreational and community functions."<sup>3</sup> This concept is appropriate for access to lakes, wetlands and reservoirs as well.

Most of the study area is experiencing dramatic population growth and demographic change. The Washington County population has increased from 26,065 in 1980 to 48,560 in 1990, an increase of over 86 percent. Much of the increase is due to immigration of retirees. Youth and mature populations are heavy users of recreation facilities and programs. Much of the mature or retirement community is seasonal; i.e., November

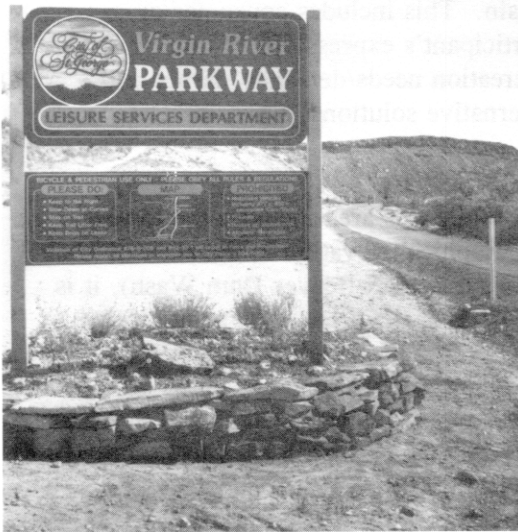
through April.

The area offers an interesting and diverse topography - high alpine and montane forests, open woodlands and desert shrub lands - each offering a range of temperatures, vegetation and climate throughout the year that can accommodate a variety of outdoor recreation activities. As anticipated, sites associated with water are most often preferred.

The State Division of Parks and Recreation manages over 10,000 acres of state parks in the basin. These data are shown in Figure 15-1.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) administers approximately 1.07 million acres. This is about five percent of their total 22.1 million acres in Utah. Developed and protected recreation areas are Baker Dam Campground, 20 miles north of St. George; Piute/Beaver Dam Mountain Wilderness Area, 15 miles southwest of St. George; Red Cliffs Campground, 4.5 miles southwest of Leeds on the I-15 frontage road and Ponderosa Grove Campground, seven miles west of US-89 on Hancock road. This represents less than 30 campgrounds and about 10 developed camp sites.

The U.S. Forest Service manages about 299,200 acres, or 13 percent of the study area; the National Park Service manages about 142,000 acres, or 6.4 percent and the BLM manages about 1,068,900 acres, or about 48 percent. This represents about 1,510,400 acres or about 68 percent of the basin area. In terms of potential availability and accessibility, federal or public lands have one of the highest potentials for outdoor recreation use. The availability of relatively remote public lands is particularly attractive to southern California population centers where citizens enjoy escaping to



Utah's high quality open space; and for the +700,000 foreign guests, many of which visit southern Utah parks and open space and spend over \$700 million dollars in Utah. Tourism now represents over \$2.1 billion of economic activity in Utah (lodging, transportation, food and retail sales). Over 2,800 jobs are related to tourism in the Southwest Multi-County District (MCD).<sup>4</sup>

Zion National Park has 381 developed campsites, six primitive sites, and 12 river sites. The Dixie National Forest has about 48 RV campsites and 46 formalized tenting sites. The Utah Division of Parks and Recreation has 59 RV campsites and about 57 tenting sites. Private providers have about 1,468 RV campsites, and about 192 tenting sites. The BLM reported 20 RV campsites (10 at Red Cliffs and 10 at Baker Dam Reservoir) and 20 tenting sites. Washington County also has 41 miles of Scenic Byways: Highway 9 from I-15 to the county's east boundary (36 miles) and a five-mile route at a turnoff from I-15 to Kolob Canyon (NP). The county enjoys 62 miles of Backways: the Kolob Reservoir road from Virgin on U-9 north to Cedar Breaks (30 miles in the county), the Smithsonian Butte Road connecting Hildale on U-59 and Rockville adjacent to U-9 (9 miles), the Mojave Desert/Joshua Tree Road beginning on US-91 and ending at US-91 totalling some 16 miles and Snow Canyon road (Route 300) beginning in Ivins and traveling through Snow Canyon State Park to U-18 (7 miles)<sup>5</sup>.

Kane County has about 147 miles of Scenic Byways: Highway 14 from U.S. 89 to the Iron County line, Highway 9 from Mt. Carmel Junction to the Washington County line and U.S. 89 from the north to

the south county boundary. Backways are also designated.

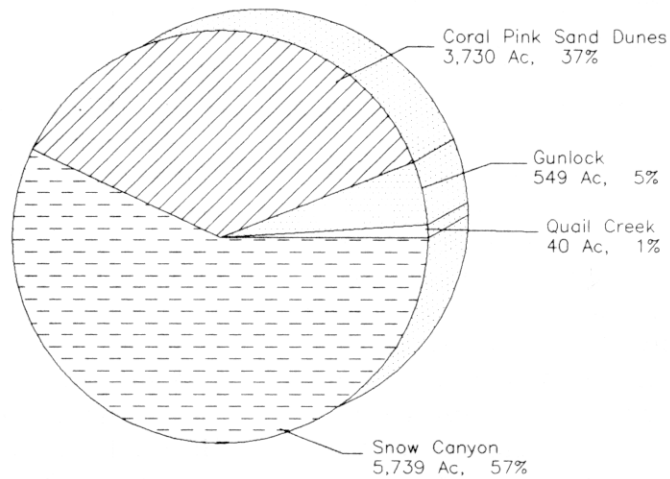
#### **15.2.1. Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund Projects**

Fourteen Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Projects have been match-funded in Washington County since 1971 (See Figure 15-2). The projects, including 50 percent LWCF match, exceed \$2 million in cost. They include three swimming pools, development in one state park and park projects in Bloomington, Santa Clara, St. George, Washington, Hildale, Ivins, Virgin and Hurricane. No projects have been submitted for reservoir or lake recreation facilities at this time; i.e., outdoor recreation on water developments.

#### **15.2.2 Utah Recreational Trails Grants**

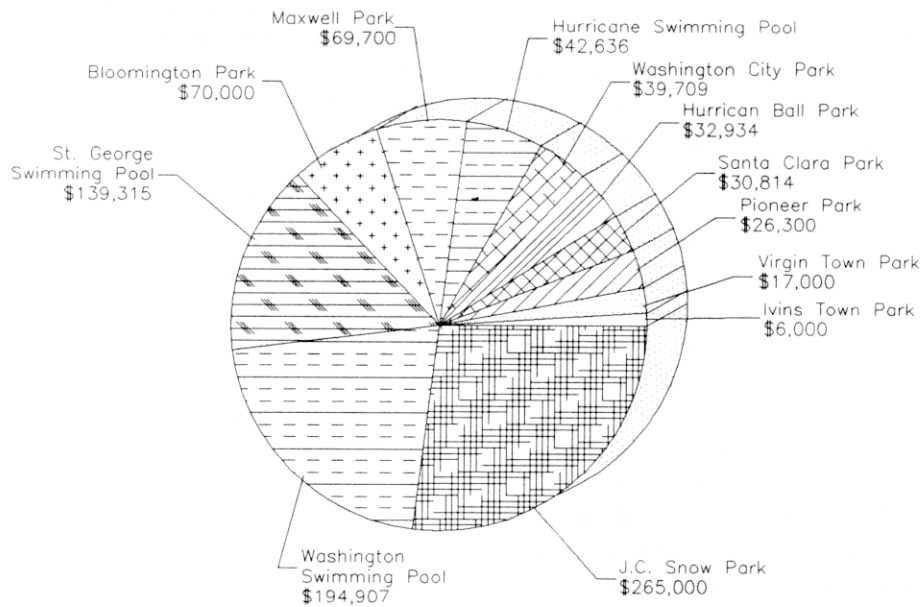
Under the Utah Senate Bill 52 (1991) Statewide Trails Program, several important non-motorized trails projects have been funded in the study area. Two of them are the Virgin River Rim Trail in the Dixie National Forest (\$7,000 match for a plus \$25,000 trail project) and the Virgin/Santa Clara River Greenway in Washington County, sponsored by "Walkways West Utah" (\$20,000 match for a plus \$50,000 project). These projects are important because they are intended to link communities, special use areas, parks and other public facilities as part of a statewide non-motorized trail system. Other projects on these drainages are proposed in the future.

**FIGURE 15-1**  
**State Park Acreage in Multi-County Planning District**



Source: State Park Real Estate Inventory, 1992

**FIGURE 15-2**  
**Land and Water Conservation Funds, 1971-1991,**  
**Washington County**



Source: Utah SCORP, 1992  
 Note: Total cost, \$2+Million  
 Snow Canyon State Park,  
 additional \$65,790

### **15.2.3 State Riverway Enhancement Program**

In addition, (Senate Bill 143, 1986) a major park has been funded on the Santa Clara River near Green Valley in association with a linear trail along the Santa Clara River. The project will provide a major staging area and day use facility. Construction is currently underway on this +\$30,000 project. This program was established subsequent to the success of the Provo-Jordan River Parkway program to reduce flood damage, enhance water quality, provide outdoor recreation, provide fishery and wildlife habitat, aid in water reclamation, protect cultural resources and provide a non-consumptive amenity in terms of functional open space along important river corridors throughout the state. This program is intended to protect river corridors and provide public access, which is a major statewide issue and need according to the Utah SCORP planning process and public surveys.<sup>5</sup>

### **15.3 Major Issues Identified**

The following major issues surfaced in a public meeting held in Cedar City in late September 1990. The issues were prioritized by those present:

- The need for improved highway and site signage - better directions to facilities, public and private
- A critical need to provide stable and/or new recreation funding sources
- The need to improve and update recreation facility and support facility infrastructure to encourage revenue generation from tourism

- Provide more winter recreation opportunities - longer season for tourism and leisure service businesses
- Improve the comprehensive planning process for the allocation of the natural resources; i.e., look at all uses/conflicts/opportunities for any water development, highway and resource development
- A need for a comprehensive localized and connecting trail system linking key resource areas such as reservoirs, lakes, forests, national and state parks, community parks, Great Western Trail and American Discovery Trail
- Improve government agency cooperation and coordination--reduce costly redundancies; come to a disposition of "federal wilderness issues" - one way or another...get on with it!

Some of the participants noted that over 50 percent of all tourists visiting the state of Utah pass by St. George and Cedar City on I-15. They want to attract more of those visitors at well designed and accommodated facilities in the study area.<sup>5</sup>

A similar request, again as part of the Utah SCORP process, was made to recreation-providing agencies in Utah early in 1991. They were asked their major concerns or issues. These are listed below:

- Inadequate funding of their respective agencies
- Need for interagency coordination

- Assuring environmental quality
- Public and private cooperation - partnerships, coordination
- Vandalism is a major concern
- Need for recreation development and infrastructure improvement
- Rising costs of liability insurance
- Deteriorating facilities and systems
- Securing volunteers - importance of volunteerism
- Communicating and justifying the economic significance of recreation
- Overcrowding of existing recreation facilities and resources
- Law enforcement
- Access to public lands - closures by private land owners
- Recreation water allocations - leaving enough for recreation and fisheries
- Environmental education - reducing conflicts, damage and management costs.

Over 23 issues were identified by government agencies. These range from funding to wetland and cultural site protection, application of computer technology, greenways and trail development needs. It was understandably different from the issues identified by resource users - with a few common concerns for funding, new facilities, wilderness, government coordination and access problems. Many of these issues can be realized or obviated by good design, adequate capitalization, public participation in the planning process and good coordination and

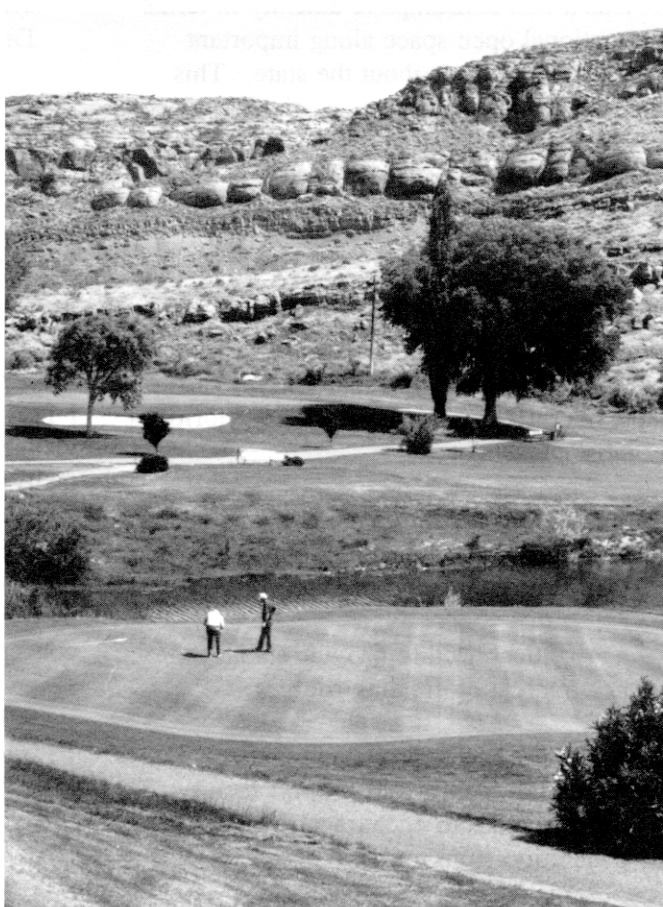
management of water resource development or river corridor protection.<sup>5</sup>

## 15.4 Outdoor Recreational Use

The use of recreation areas has been rapidly increasing during the past number of years. This use is expected to increase even faster in the future.

### 15.4.1 Utah State Parks

Four parks are within the study area: Coral Pink Sand Dunes (110,417 visitation, 1991); Gunlock (34,190 visitation, 1991); Snow Canyon (192,000 visitation, 1991, plus an estimated 262,341 counted on Route 300



(through the park for the first time) and Quail Creek Reservoir (visitation unavailable). Discounting the first ever highway count through Snow Canyon, visitation to these study area parks increased 16.3 percent. This is delineated in Figure 15-3.

#### **15.4.2 Zion National Park**

Park visitation increased over 48 percent from 1985 to 1991; i.e., from 1.69 million to over 2.5 million in 1991. From 1990 to 1991, visitation grew about 6.4 percent (+134,592) in one year to 2.23 million.<sup>7</sup>

#### **15.4.3 Economic Development**

##### **Administration Tourism Study**

This study has developed an inventory of tourism support facilities. The Southwest Multi-County District has 12 airports (nine have no services), 12 roadside rest areas, 118 campgrounds, 123 cultural/recreational sites and over 5,500 rooms in 200 motels. Several general conclusions about the 1992 Tourism Study include:

- Tourism represents one of the most important activities in the Utah economy
- Prospects for continued growth in the industry are favorable
- Impacts on state and local revenues are generally positive
- Tourism can help stabilize and diversify the economic base without displacing other industries
- Although the infrastructure to support tourism is substantial, improvements and/or additions are needed, particularly in state and federal parks/recreation areas
- Many sources exist to finance tourism infrastructure improvements.<sup>4</sup>

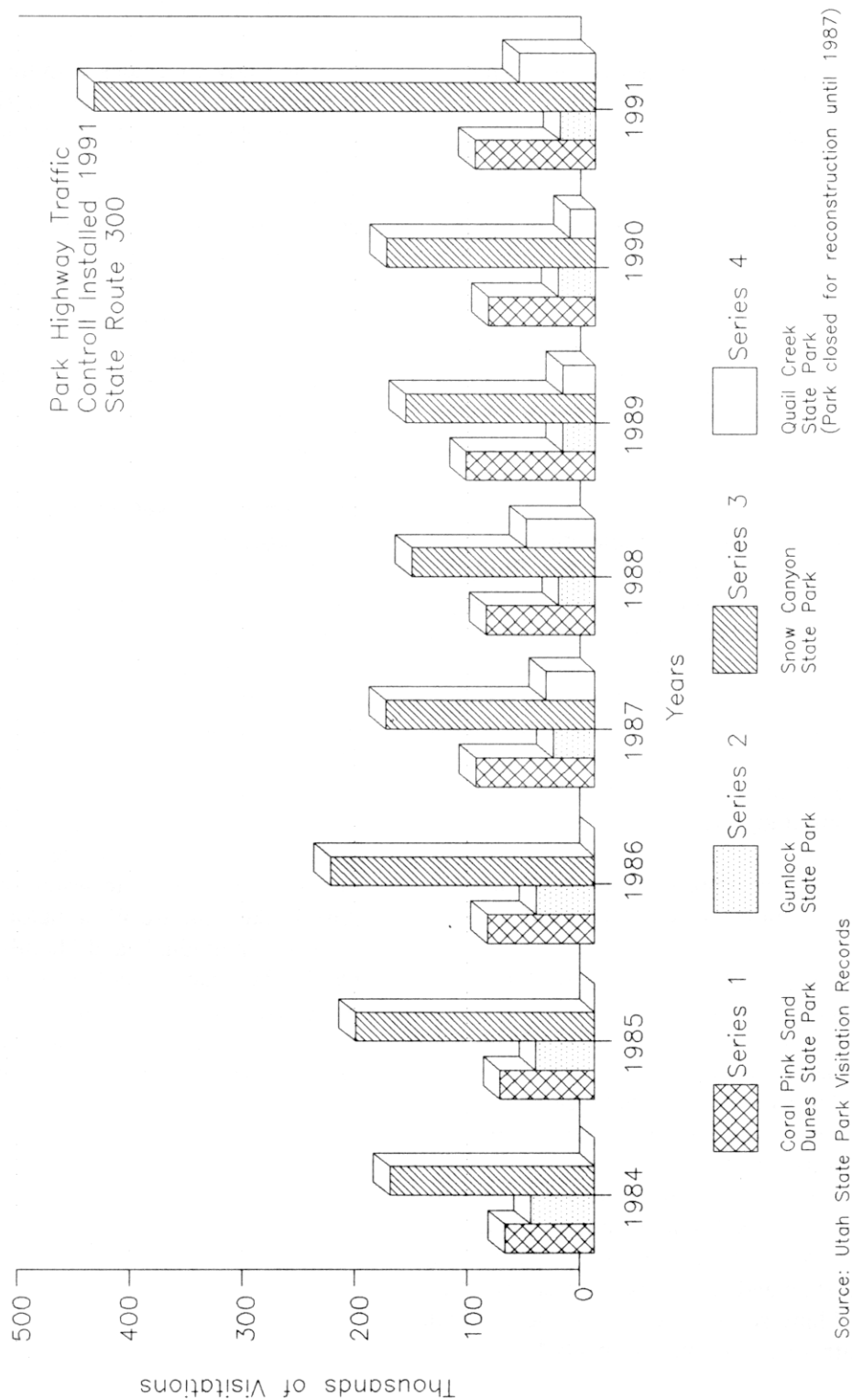
The study concludes with the importance of resident and non-resident tourism. Most data are related to non-resident tourism. High quality recreation facilities are critical to the success of tourism and marketing in the state of Utah. Major funding and the discovery and utilization of new sources of revenue continue to be of the highest priority. Water development should incorporate adequate infrastructure for leisure services and facilities and provide continued support for operation and maintenance.

#### **15.5 Outdoor Recreation Activity and Needs**

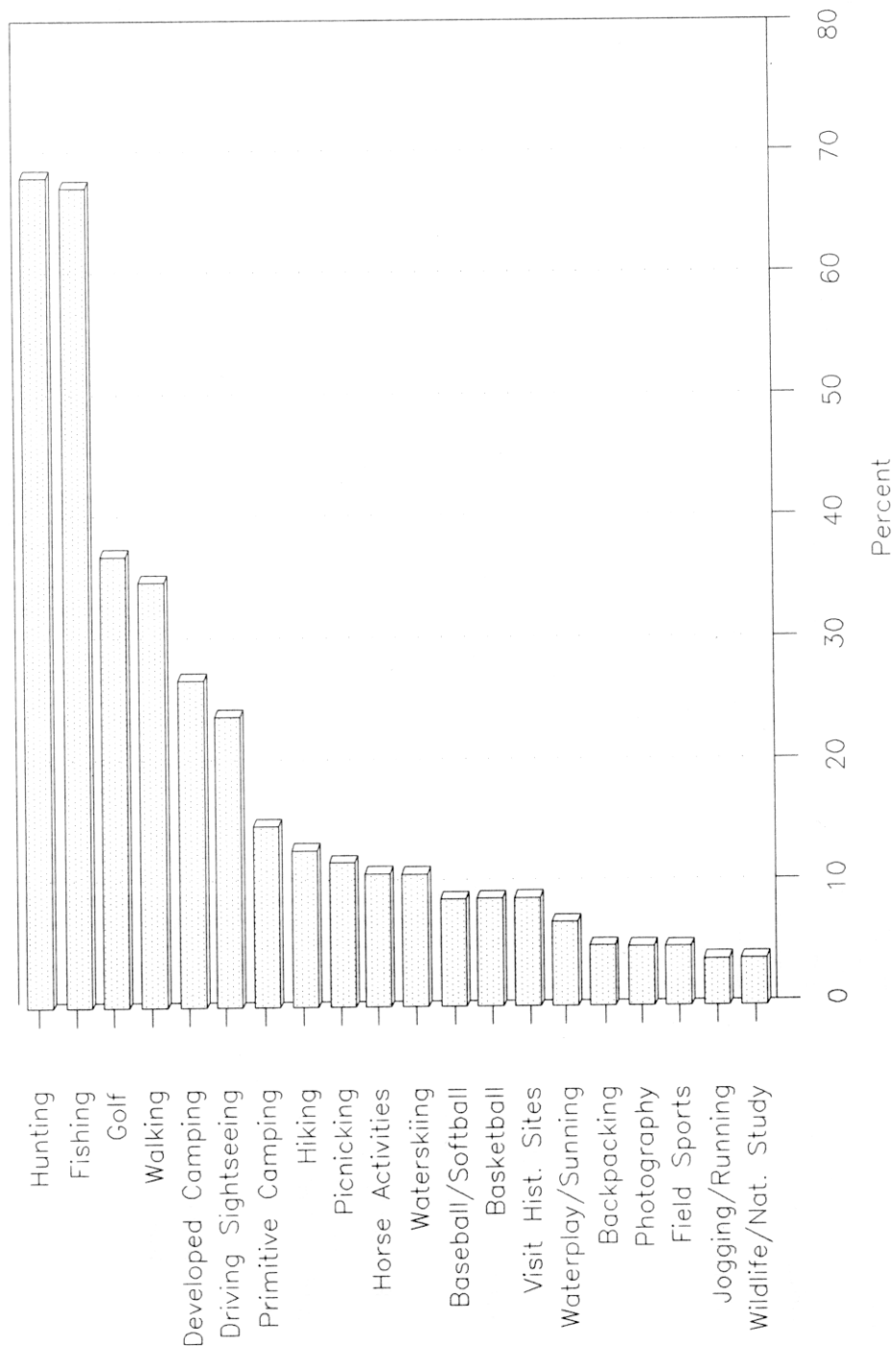
The following series, Figures 15-4 thru 15-8, are from the 1990-91 Utah SCORP Household Survey<sup>4</sup> of over 2,400 homes in Utah. The figures describe the top favored "individual" outdoor recreation activities, the top 20 favorite "family" activities (we do different things in a group or with family), new "community facilities that are needed", "statewide facilities needing improvement" and new "statewide facilities needed." These probably relate more to water developments. Also broken out are Washington County's favorite "individual" and "family" activities. Obviously, many activities and facilities are preferred near water, while a few, like fishing and boating, are clearly dependent on water or water developments (reservoirs). ■



**FIGURE 15-3**  
**State Park Visitation: 1984-1991**

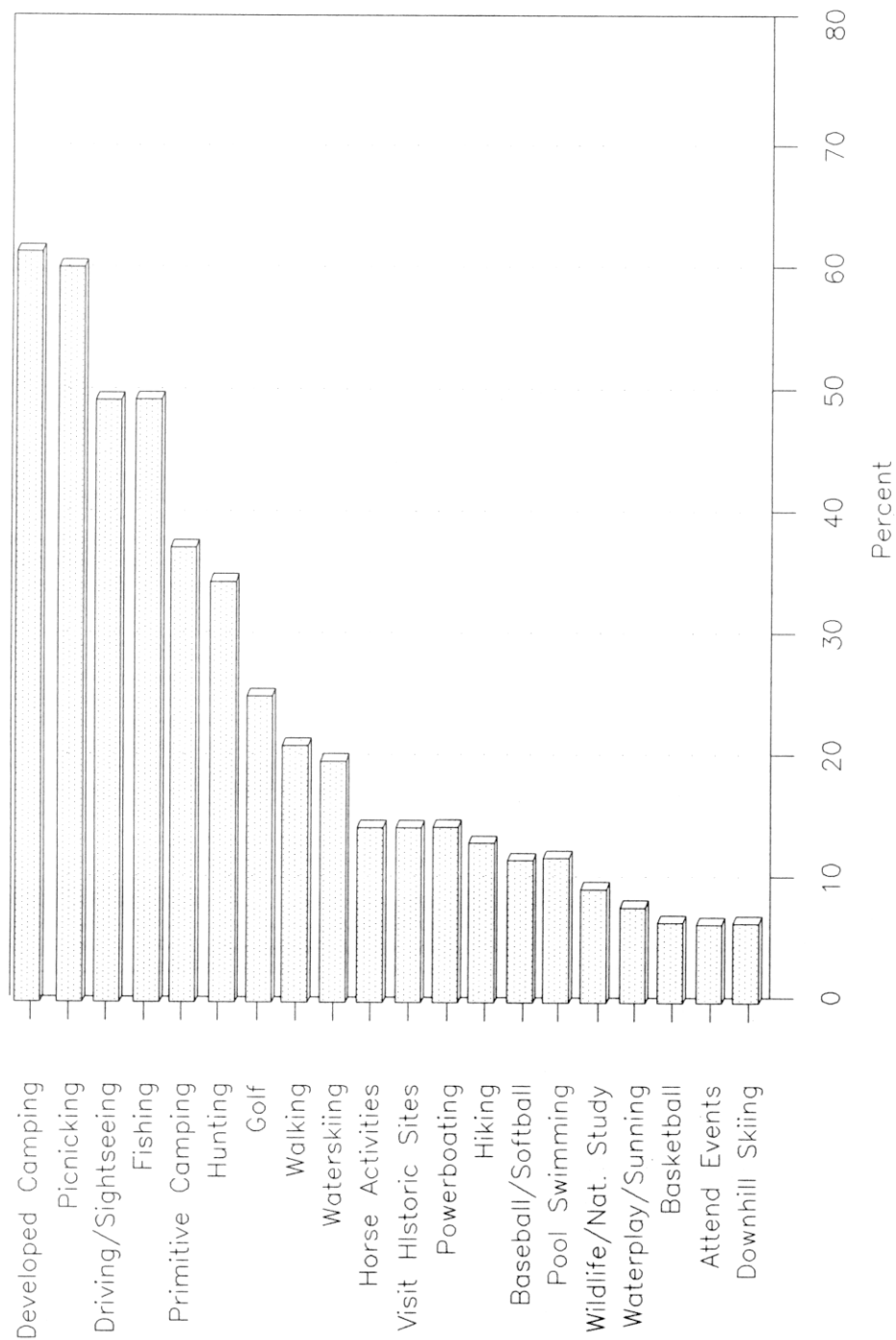


**FIGURE 15-4**  
**Top 20 Favorite Individual Activities**



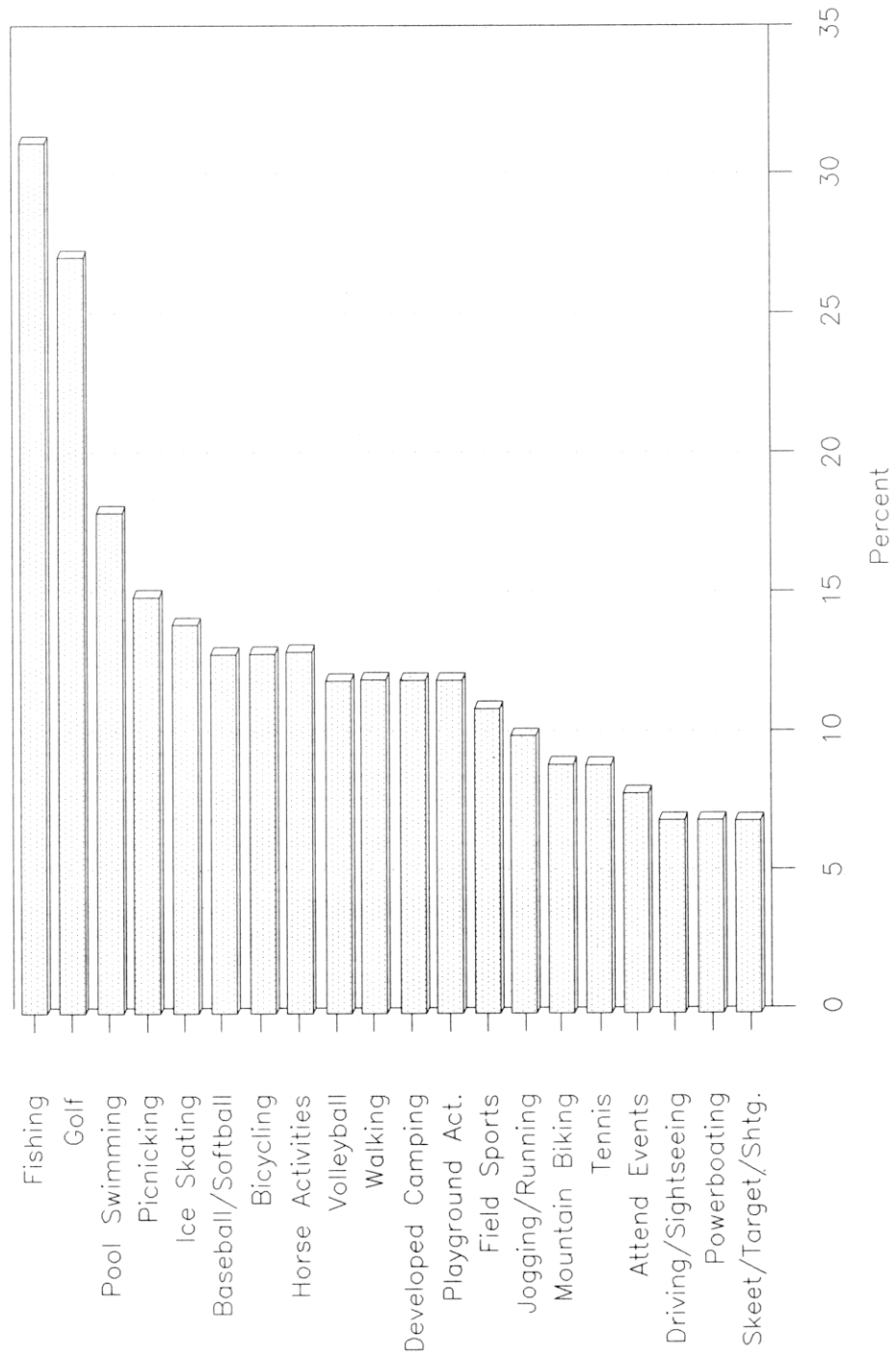
Note: Includes all of the Southwest Multi-County District  
 435 Residents

**FIGURE 15-5**  
**Top 20 Favorite Family Activities**



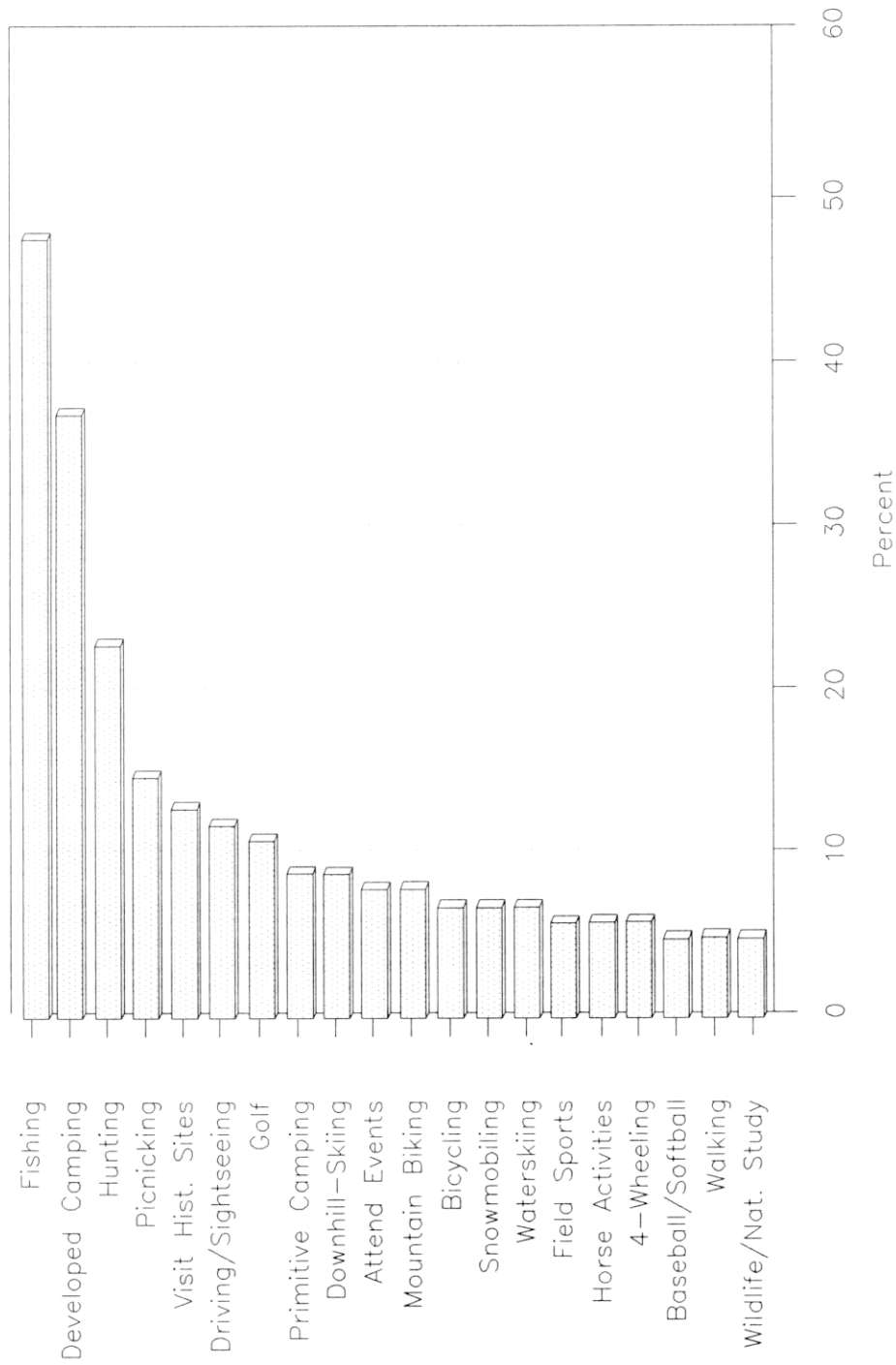
Note: Includes all of the Southwest Multi-County District  
435 Respondents

**FIGURE 15-6**  
**New Community Facilities Needed**



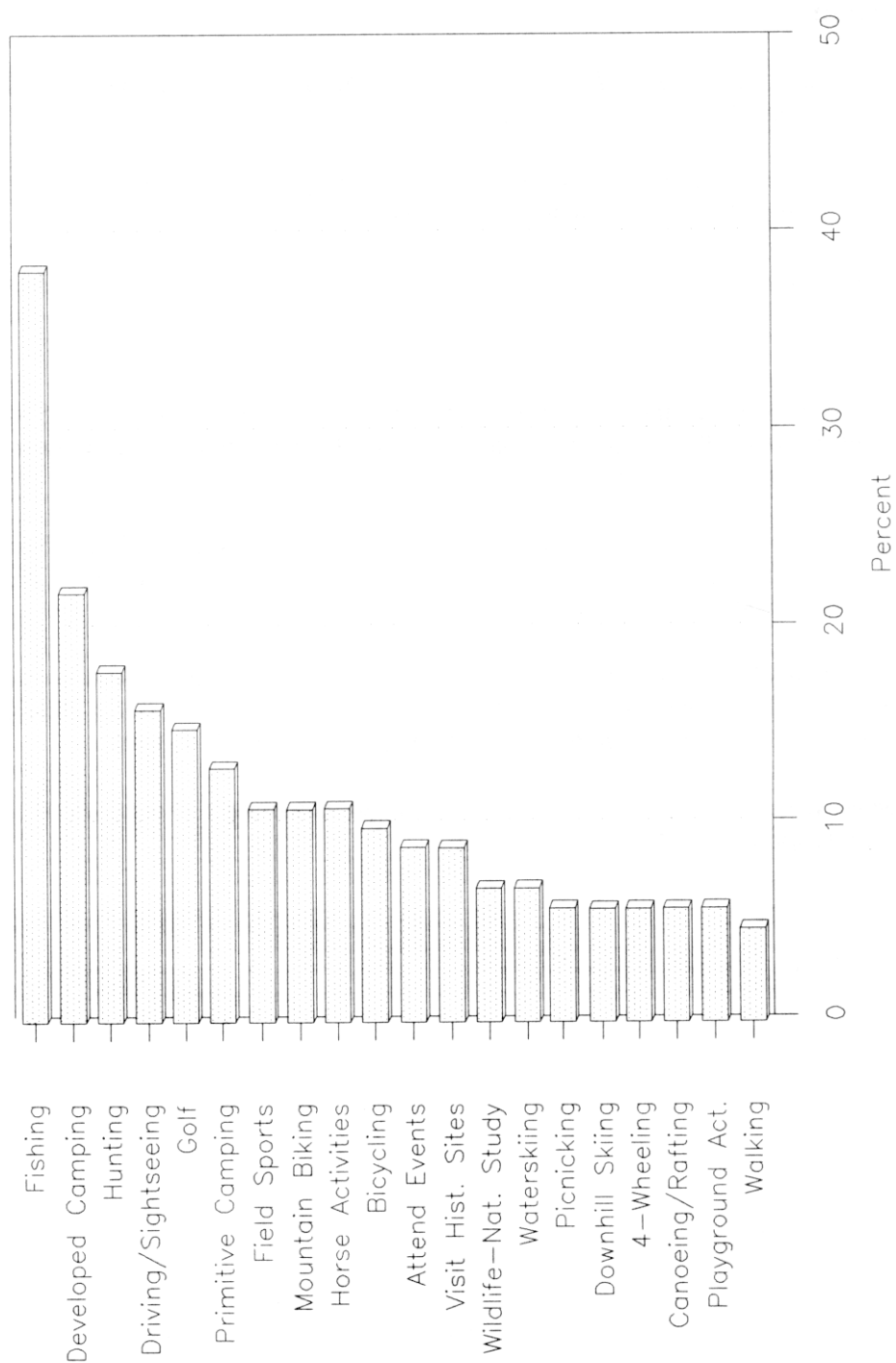
Note: Includes all of the Southwest Multi-County District

**FIGURE 15-7**  
**Statewide Facilities Needing Improvement**



Note: Includes all of the Southwest Multi-County District

**FIGURE 15-8**  
**Statewide New Facilities Needed**



Note: Includes all of the Southwest Multi-County District

## 15.6 References

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